

The Christian Tradition

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Reading and Study Guide for *The Story of God*

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1. What is the Greek word for God?
2. In thinking about God (theology), what two important considerations are raised in Genesis 1:1?
3. Where is both Jewish and Christian faith centered or rooted in contrast to both Eastern mysticism and Western philosophical speculation?
4. What is the relation between *history* and *story* in the Bible?
5. How does Lodahl explain differences in details between Gospel accounts of the same events?
6. What does the word *inspired* mean?
7. What does it mean to say that the Bible is *inspired*?
8. What did John Wesley say about the inspiration of Scripture?
9. In theology, what is *tradition*?
10. What three “streams” of tradition feed the Christian faith?
11. What was the main feature of the religious movement started by John and Charles Wesley?
12. What was the name given to this movement?
13. What does John Wesley mean by “perfection in love” (from 1 John 4:8, 16)?
14. What are the three specific characteristics of John Wesley’s understanding of *sanctification* or the life of holiness? (Be able to summarize each in a sentence.)
15. What does it mean to describe the Christian faith as *catholic*?
16. What is the difference between *general revelation* (natural theology) and *special revelation* (revealed theology)?
17. What are the four classical rational arguments for the existence of God? (Be able to summarize each in a sentence.)
18. What is the difference between the *certainty of proof* and the *certainty of faith*?
19. What is the “Wesleyan quadrilateral?”
20. What factors in John Wesley’s life led him to recover for the Christian faith an emphasis on *experience* and assurance?
21. What is prevenient grace?
22. What are the four “omni-” doctrines traditionally used in theology? (Be able to define each in a short sentence.)
23. What problem is there with the “omni-” doctrines?
24. What is the difference between *moral evil* and *natural evil*?
25. What is the *freewill defense* in dealing with moral evil?
26. What does the author mean when he says that God shares his power with human beings, the *empowerment of the other* motivated by love?
27. What is the point of Genesis 1-2?
28. What is the difference between ideas of *naturalistic evolution* and *theistic evolution*?
29. What is the root idea behind the scriptural affirmation that humans are created “in the image of God?”
30. What is a better way to translate the word that has traditionally been translated “soul” (*nephesh*, Gen 2:7)?
31. Why should Scripture not be consulted to answer scientific questions?

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1. Why is God willing to take the risk of bestowing *moral freedom* on human beings?
2. What is the chief danger in seeing the account of Adam and Eve as a simple recital of events that happened long ago?
3. Be able to list and discuss the six important truths about the *nature of sin*.

4. What does the *serpent* represent in the Garden account?
5. What profound observation about human life and relationship in the opening narratives of the Bible underlie the Christian *doctrine of original sin*?
6. “Where was God when one-fourth of the human population was destroyed in one blow?”
7. What, in Martin Luther’s words, is *original sin*?
8. Be able to describe briefly the opposing views of Augustine and Pelagius on *original sin*.
9. Be able to summarize Lodahl’s reference to God as “the great Taker of Risks.”
10. What is *prevenient grace*?
11. What does the word *covenant* mean?
12. What is meant by the Wesleyan understanding of *synergism*?
13. What are the four major OT covenants?
14. What is meant by a *Christonormative* approach to understanding the nature and character of God?
15. What is at the root of the *covenant with Noah*?
16. Summarize the implication about the nature of God that Lodahl draws from the Flood story, and which he connects with the concept of God as “the living God.”
17. What are the constants, those things that do not change, in human relationship to God?
18. What is significant about “laughter” associated with God from the Abraham story?
19. Theologically, what is the relationship between *exodus* (the event) and *Sinai* (also the event at this place)?
20. What is the OT concept of *Torah*, and why should it probably not be translated “law?”
21. How does the concept of *grace* figure into the covenant with Moses?
22. Be able to summarize Lodahl’s discussion of the true meaning of “Sabbath rest.”
23. Why are the people of Israel denied physical images to represent God?
24. How can mental images of God be just as idolatrous as physical ones?
25. How do the following two statements relate to each other in Lodahl’s discussion of the covenant with David?
“God has a plan and a purpose for His creation.” “God is not bound like a slave to some predetermined master plan. . .”
26. Why were the ideas of *kingship* (political power) and a *temple* (institutionalized religion) in some ways a threat to proper understandings of God in ancient Israel?
27. What is the “divine pathos?”
28. Be able to summarize Jurgen Moltmann’s definition of *prophecy*.
29. What is meant by saying that biblical faith is a thoroughly *historical faith*?
30. What is the significance for understanding the incarnation of Christ in noting that Matthew’s Gospel begins with a genealogy?
31. Why is it important to affirm that Jesus *could have yielded to the temptations* in the Wilderness?
32. Be able to summarize *Spirit Christology* as a way of understanding Jesus.
33. Be able to identify and briefly describe the *four critical junctures of Jesus’ ministry* where a Spirit Christology helps us understand who Jesus was and is.
34. What was the center of the Early Church’s Gospel message?
35. How does Lodahl explain *logos Christology* from the footwashing passage in John 13 (compared to the Christ hymn in Philippians 2)?
36. Why is it just as important to say that *God is Jesus*, as well as to say that *Jesus is God*?
37. Why is it important to note that the early church Councils tended to move away from biblical narratives as they struggled to define the identity of Jesus?
38. Why does Lodahl place the chapter of Jesus’ *resurrection* before the chapter on Jesus’ *crucifixion*?
39. What is the significance of the *resurrection* of Jesus?
40. What does the term *atonement* mean?
41. What is the common thread running through all of the church’s various ways throughout history of explaining the *atonement*?
42. Be able to list and discuss the *four dominant New Testament models* for understanding how Jesus provides atonement for us.

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1. In what way does the *account of Pentecost* parallel the Old Testament *story of the Tower of Babel*

2. What are some of the barriers that, in spite of the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, place an ideal community out of human reach?
3. Be able to name and briefly discuss the four “marks” of the church.
4. What is a *sacrament*?
5. What sacraments do most Protestant Christians practice?
6. What is *sacramental theology*?
7. What is the *Eucharist*?
8. Why in the Wesleyan tradition is communion open to people who are not members of the particular church or, perhaps, who are not even Christian?
9. Briefly describe how the taking of communion can include the *past*, *present*, and the *future*
10. What are the two closely related components of *proper response* to the Gospel?
11. What are three different *dimensions of God’s saving activity* as it intersects the human heart? Be able briefly to define and discuss these.
12. What is the difference between *prevenient grace* and *transforming grace*?
13. What is *koinonia*?
14. What is the basic biblical meaning of the term “sanctify?”
15. In light of the above definition, what does it mean to be a “holy people?”
16. What is the difference between *ceremonial holiness* and *ethical holiness*?
17. In the Wesleyan tradition, what does it mean to be “perfected in love?”
18. In the context of the Wesleyan concern to “spread scriptural holiness throughout the land,” what is *sanctification* (or *entire sanctification*)?
19. From a relational perspective, what is Lodahl’s definition of *sin*?
20. How did John Wesley define *sanctification*?
21. If *perfection* is **not** to be understood in the sense of “without error or fault,” how then **can** it be properly understood in the Christian life?
22. What are two different ways of understand the term “end” when speaking of the “end times?”
23. Be able to discuss how Matthew’s account of John the Baptist might help us understand the issues involved in *expectations about future unknown events*.
24. Be able to list and discuss Lodahl’s explanation of the *three spheres of Jesus’ ministry* that sheds light on His intended meaning of the “kingdom of God.”
25. How can the *kingdom of God* be **present** yet still **future**?
26. What is the major problem with the concept of the *immortality of the soul*?
27. What are three reasons for preferring a belief in *divine resurrection* over belief in *the immortality of the soul*?
28. What is the *end* of God’s story?